

## Department of Justice Press Release

**For Immediate Release**

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**U.S. Department of Justice**

**Office of Public Affairs**

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### **Pakistani Taliban Leader Charged in Terrorism Conspiracy Resulting in Murder of Seven Americans in Afghanistan**

WASHINGTON—Hakimullah Mehsud, the self-proclaimed emir of the Pakistani Taliban, has been charged by criminal complaint for his alleged involvement in the murder of seven American citizens on Dec. 30, 2009 at a U.S. military base in Afghanistan, the Justice Department announced today.

The two-count criminal complaint, filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on Aug. 20, 2010 and unsealed today, charges Hakimullah Mehsud, aka Hakimullah Mahsud, with conspiracy to murder U.S. citizens abroad and conspiracy to use a weapon of mass destruction (explosives) against U.S. citizens abroad.

According to an affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint, Hakimullah Mehsud, a resident of the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) in Pakistan, is the leader of the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), or what is more commonly known as the Pakistani Taliban. The TTP's primary purpose is to force withdrawal of Pakistani troops from the FATA of Pakistan, which is located along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border; to unite against NATO forces in Afghanistan and to establish Sharia—or Islamic law—in the tribal territories. The affidavit alleges that the TTP has had alleged roles in, or claimed responsibility for, a number of acts of violence, including the December 2007 assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the September 2009 suicide attack on the Bannu, Pakistan police station, and numerous attacks on NATO supply lines throughout the FATA. These attacks are often coordinated with other insurgents or terrorist groups, including the Taliban and al Qaeda.

Today, the State Department designated the TTP as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and also designated Hakimullah Mehsud and another Taliban leader, Wali Ur Rehman, as Specially Designated Global Terrorists. The State Department's Rewards for Justice program is offering a reward of up to \$5 million each for information leading to their location.

Hakimullah Mehsud inherited the role as the leader of the TTP after its former leader and founder, Baitullah Mehsud, was killed in August 2009, according to the affidavit. Hakimullah Mehsud remains the commander of TTP, which continues to plan and carry out attacks against the interests of the United States from the FATA. The TTP has recently claimed responsibility for the May 1, 2010 failed bombing of Times Square in New York and also claimed responsibility for the Dec. 30, 2009 suicide bombing in Afghanistan that is charged in the criminal complaint unsealed today.

On Dec. 30, 2009, the affidavit alleges, Humam Khalil Abu Mulal al-Balawi, also known as Abu Dujanah al-Khorasani (al-Balawi), a Jordanian physician, entered a U.S. military base near the town of Khost, Afghanistan, for a pre-planned meeting. Shortly after entering the base, al-Balawi detonated a suicide device concealed beneath his clothing, killing himself and seven U.S. citizens. Six other U.S. citizens were injured.

Soon after the attack, the affidavit alleges, the media arm of the TTP released a video depicting Hakimullah Mehsud and al-Balawi seated together, in which they explain in detail their motivation for launching a suicide attack against the Americans. In the video, Hakimullah Mehsud introduces al-Balawi, states al-Balawi's reasons for becoming a suicide bomber and describes Americans as the enemy of the mujahideen.

According to the affidavit, Hakimullah Mehsud and al-Balawi both claim responsibility for an upcoming attack in the video, stating together, "And we arranged this attack to let the Americans understand that the belief of Allah, the iman [faith] that we hold, the taqwa [piety] that we strive for cannot be exchanged for all the wealth in the world." In the video, Hakimullah Mehsud then explains that the motive for the attack against the Americans is revenge for the death of the former emir of the TTP, Baitullah Mehsud. Today, Hakimullah

Mehsud is a fugitive believed to be residing in the FATA.

“Today’s charges underscore our continuing commitment to seek justice for Americans who are murdered or victimized by overseas terrorist attacks,” said David Kris, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. “I applaud the many agents, analysts, and prosecutors who helped bring about this prosecution.”

“We have no higher priority than bringing to justice terrorists who kill Americans serving and working abroad,” said Ronald C. Machen, Jr., U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. “We will continue to use every tool at our disposal to seek justice for the victims of this heinous terrorist attack. I am proud of the efforts of our agents, analysts and prosecutors who have worked so hard on this case.”

“The FBI is committed to bringing to justice those responsible for this horrific crime and, equally important, to provide answers and closure to family and friends of those killed,” said Shawn Henry, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI’s Washington Field Office.

The investigation into this matter was conducted by the FBI’s Washington Field Office. The prosecutors handling the case are Trial Attorneys Sharon Lever and Jeffrey Groharing of the Counterterrorism Section in the Justice Department’s National Security Division, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Rachel Carlson Lieber and Michael C. DiLorenzo of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Columbia.

If convicted of the charges unsealed today, Hakimullah Mehsud faces a maximum sentence of life in prison. A criminal complaint is merely a formal charge that a defendant violated a criminal law. All defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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